



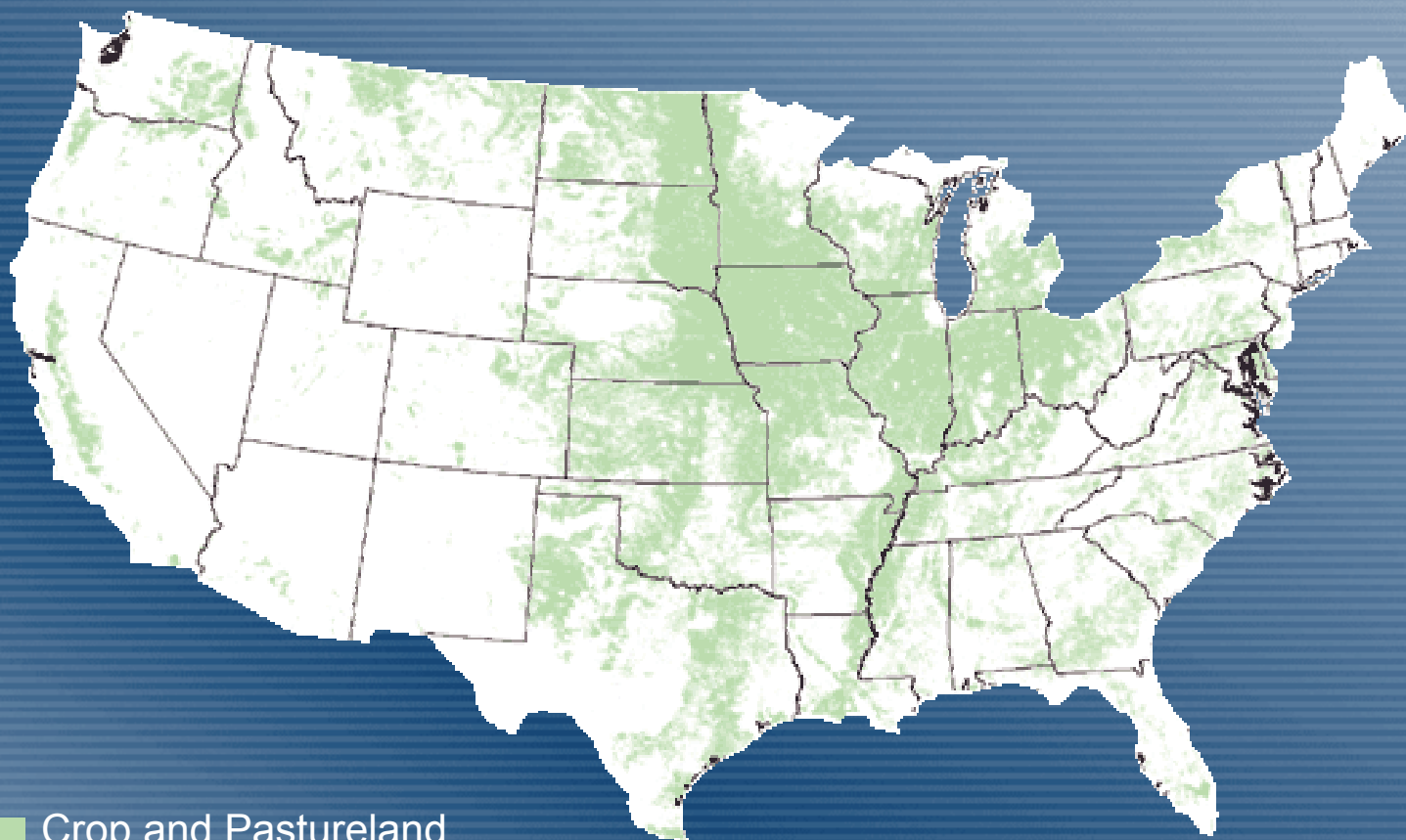
Farmland Protection: The Role of Public Preferences for *Rural Amenities*

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The Nation has about *1 billion* acres of farmland.

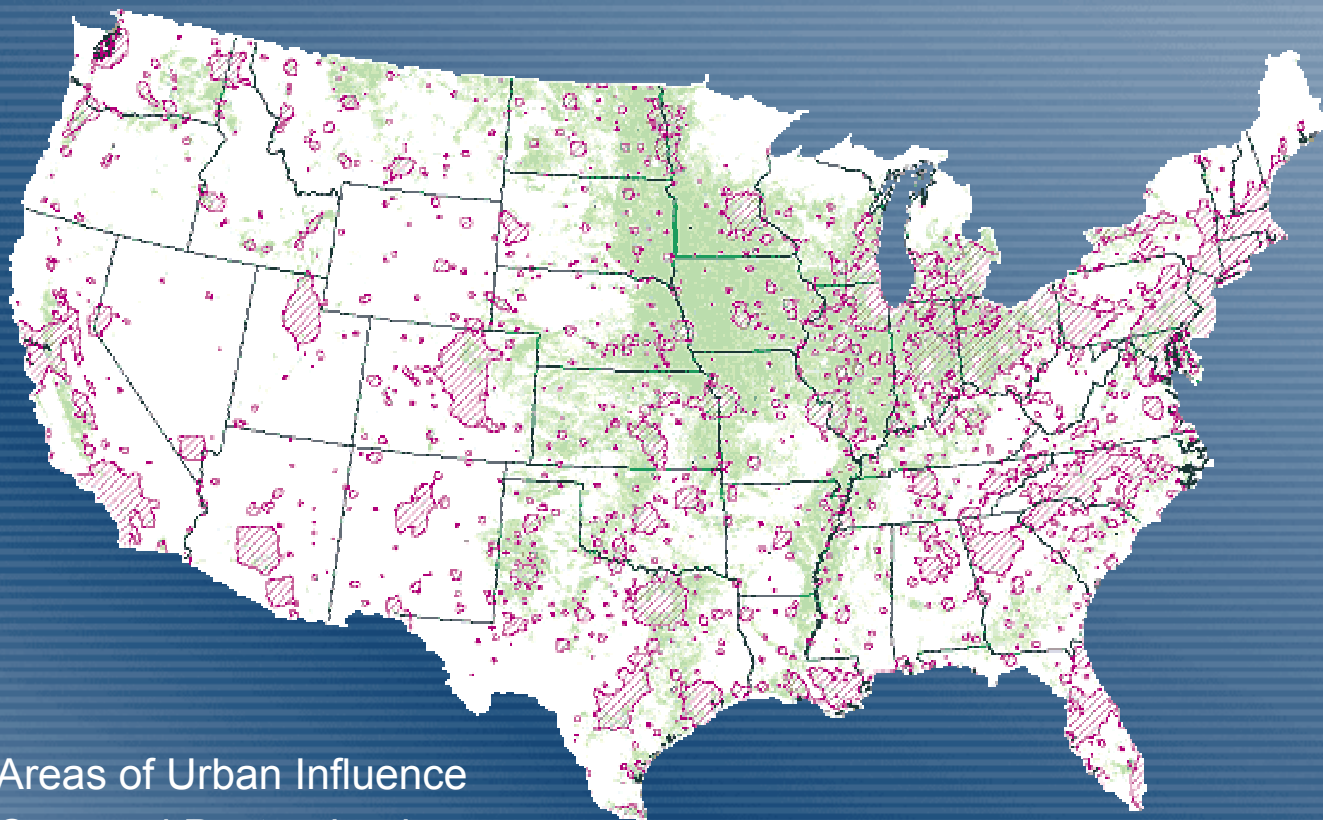


■ Crop and Pastureland

Source: USGS 1990



In 1990, about *15 percent* of U.S. farmland was subject to some degree of urban influence...

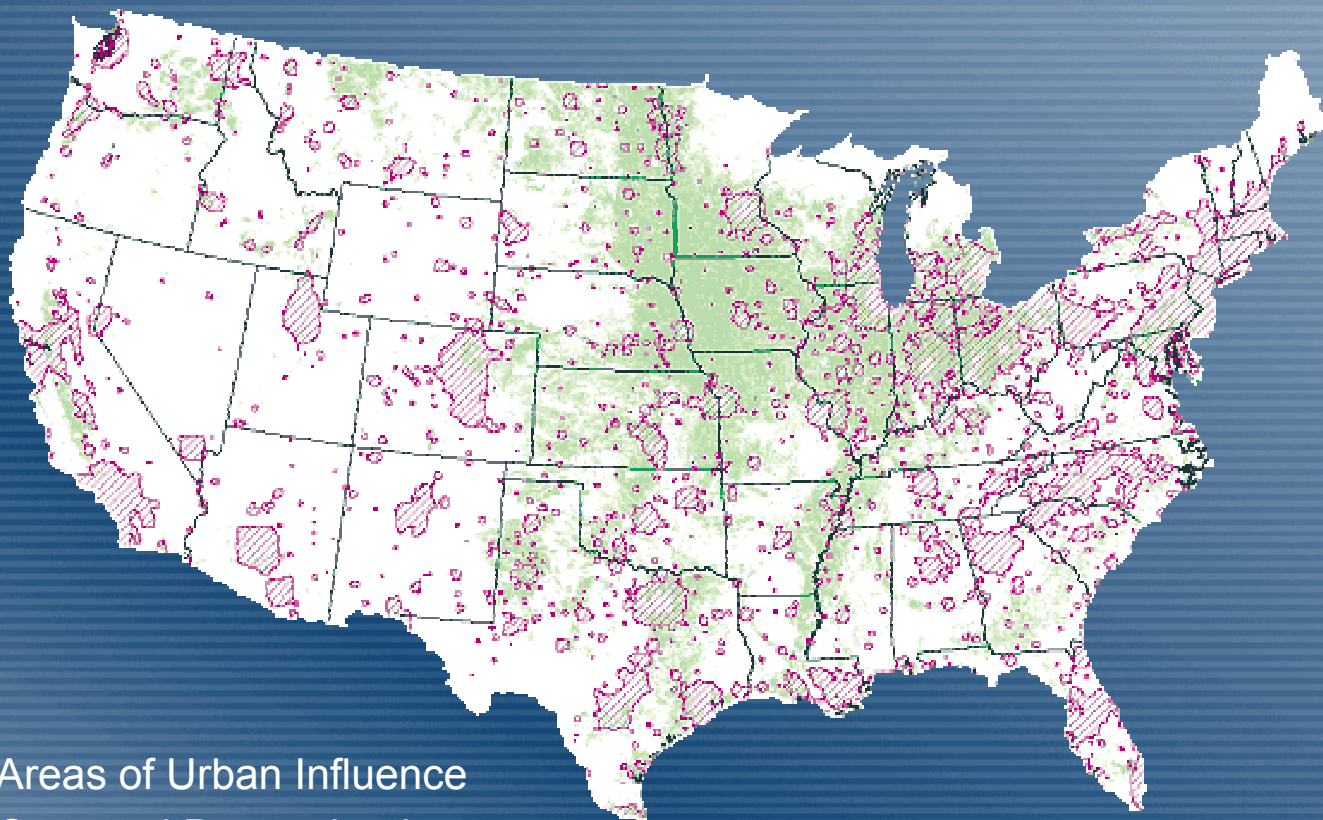


 Areas of Urban Influence
 Crop and Pastureland

Sources: 1990 Census of Population; USGS 1990



...but only about *0.1 percent* of farmland is actually converted to urban uses each year.

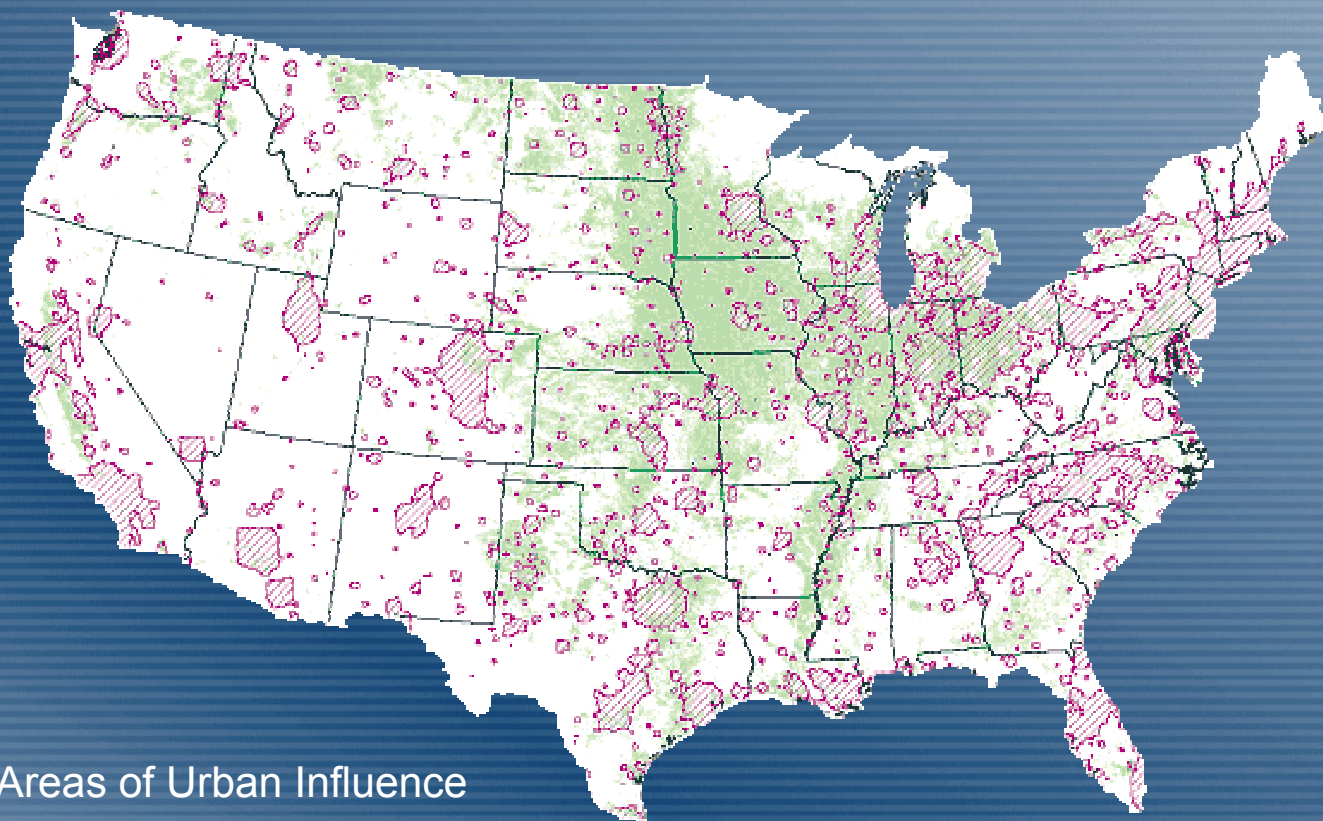




 Areas of Urban Influence
 Crop and Pastureland

Sources: 1990 Census of Population; USGS 1990



This suggests that our supply of farmland is not at risk at a national level.

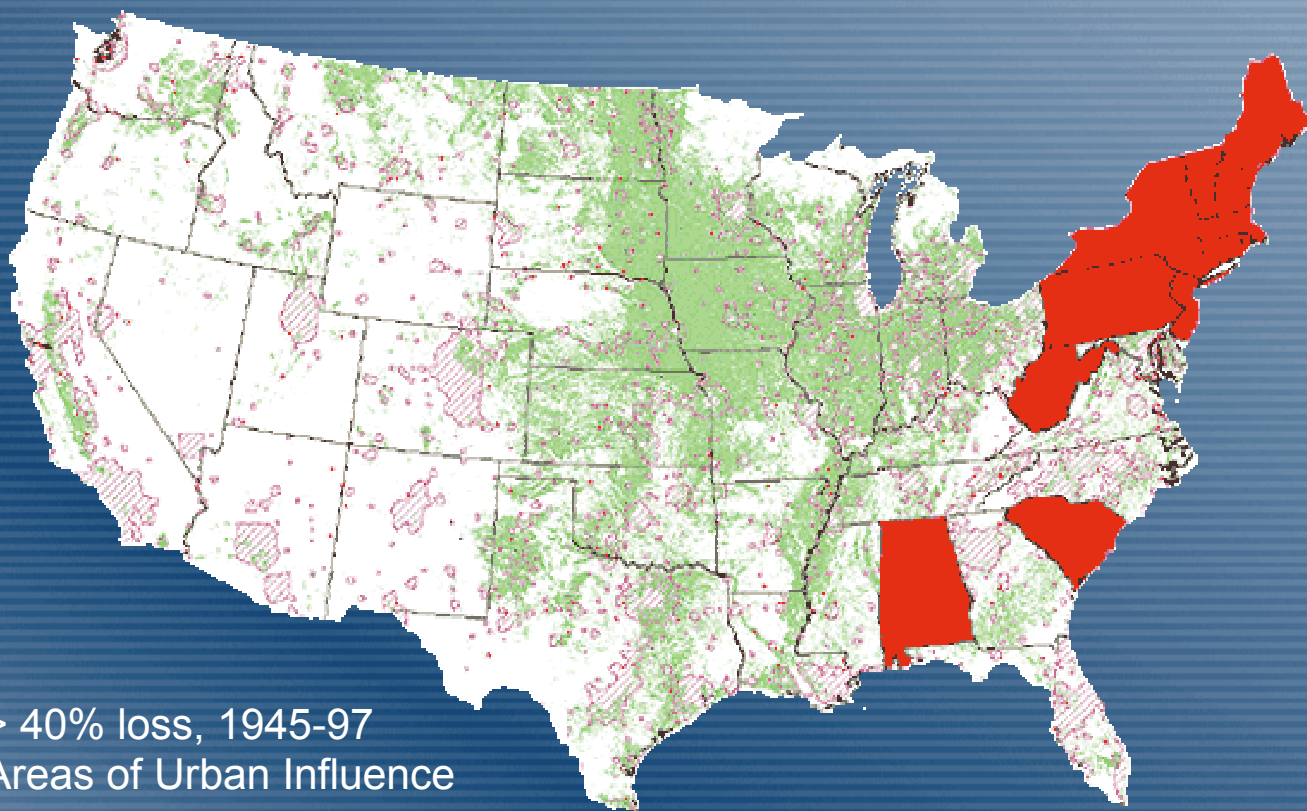





-  Areas of Urban Influence
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Sources: 1990 Census of Population; USGS 1990



But some States have lost more than *40 percent* of their farmland base since 1945...

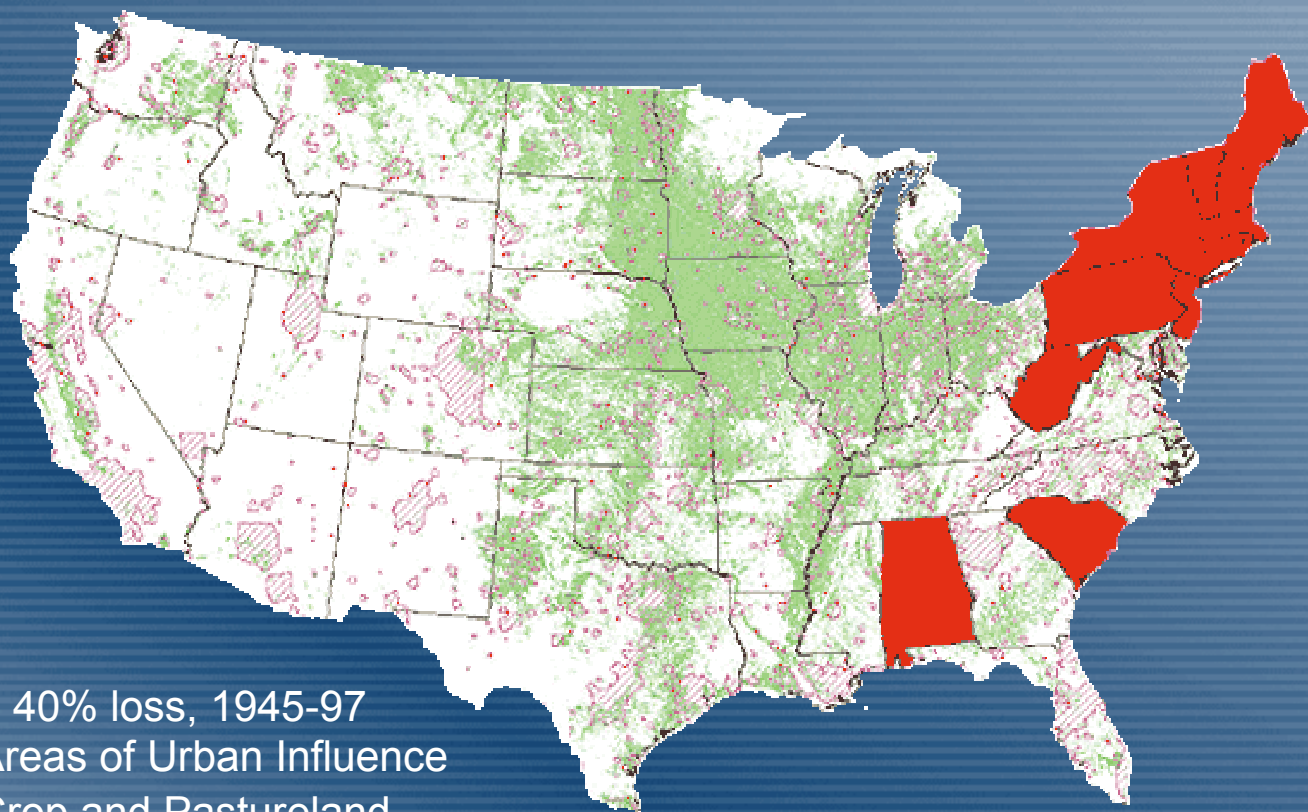





-  > 40% loss, 1945-97
-  Areas of Urban Influence
-  Crop and Pastureland

Sources: American Farmland Trust;
1990 Census of Population; USGS 1990



...and all States have enacted *farmland protection measures*.



-  > 40% loss, 1945-97
-  Areas of Urban Influence
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Sources: American Farmland Trust;
1990 Census of Population; USGS 1990



Our Research

Given the Nation's abundance of farmland for producing food and fiber, ERS investigated which rural amenities States seek to protect when they enact farmland protection measures.

- We investigated how preferences for rural amenities vary across the United States.
- We identified the implications these preferences have for a Federal role in protecting amenities.



Our Approach

- We examined enabling legislation for a variety of State farmland protection measures.
- We analyzed ranking criteria used in Purchase of Development Rights programs.
- To add context, we explored the broader suite of rural land protection programs enacted in several States with a long history of farmland protection (MA, VT, PA, NJ, MD).



Our Findings

States seek an array of objectives, but...

- Protecting rural amenities was the reason most often cited for implementing farmland protection measures.
- The amenities most often sought for protection are “a farming way of life,” “open space,” and “scenic beauty.”



Our Observations

- Many rural amenities can be provided by land that is not associated with farming.
- Yet, clearly, State legislatures and the people they represent believe farmland provides unique and valuable attributes that make it desirable to keep some land in active farming.

More Information